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The Scavenger's Daughter

Joseph Shragge

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

September 2001

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ABSTRACT

The Scavenger's Daughter

Joseph Shragge

The Scavenger's Daughter is a five act play in the form of a medieval Miracle play. Though borrowing from medieval drama the play is mainly concerned with a modernist aesthetic in the vein of Artaud, Brecht, and Beckett. The play centres around a travelling merchant who builds and sells automatons which bear a close resemblance to the mythical Golem. He sells one of his automatons to a group of shepherds. When the "body" breaks a conflict begins between the shepherds and the merchant sparking a comedy of errors with the body. The play draws heavily on traditions of burlesque, travesty, satire, and farce.

THESIS CHECKLIST

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ACT I

i

A field. The THIRD SHEPHERD is alone on stage. He shades his eyes with his hand. Looks about. Moves center and looks into the audience.

THIRD SHEPHERD: One, two, three, four...four...four...where did it go? (*Walks left. Looks back.*) One...two...three...four. (*Walks right.*) One, two, three, four. (*Sees it.*) Five! One, two, three, four, five. (*Sits down.*) Five sheep. (*Sleepily*) One-two-three-four-five. (*He falls asleep.*)

Enter FIRST and SECOND SHEPHERD.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Look.

SECOND SHEPHERD: That's twice in one day.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Let's just let him sleep.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I don't work all day so he can sleep.

FIRST SHEPHERD: If we wake him up, he'll just fall asleep again.

SECOND SHEPHERD: (*picks up a rock.*) This'll wake him up.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Wait.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Why?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I have a better idea. (*He sneaks up close to THIRD SHEPHERD, and whispers in his ear.*) You're going to die.

THIRD SHEPHERD *stirs restlessly.*

FIRST SHEPHERD: You're going to die. You're going to die—

THIRD SHEPHERD *wakes up with a scream.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: Awake?

THIRD SHEPHERD: Was I asleep?

SECOND SHEPHERD: For the second time.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I was hanging from this enormous tree that was so high up I could barely see the ground.

SECOND SHEPHERD *to* FIRST SHEPHERD: See what that accomplished.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I was hanging by a branch in my mouth. I saw someone passing far below, and I wanted to yell for help, but if I opened my mouth I knew I was going to fall and die.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why didn't you use your hands?

THIRD SHEPHERD: He wouldn't have seen them if I had tried to signal.

FIRST SHEPHERD: If you'd held onto a branch with your hand, you could have used your voice to call for help.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I couldn't.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Next time I'll use a stick. (*He throws the rock offstage.*)

THIRD SHEPHERD: One...two...three.

Enter MERCHANT. *He has a small cart with parts of what appear to be bodies made of clay. Hands, arms and legs, hang out from the cart.*

MERCHANT (*absently singing.*):

The cows lay down
The grass is dry—
The grass is dry
Cows lay down.

MERCHANT *approaches the* Shepherds.

MERCHANT: Hot day today.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We don't want any of your junk.

MERCHANT: Who said junk?

FIRST SHEPHERD: We only have five sheep—ask him.

MERCHANT: Anyone can afford what I've got.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Two...three...four...five.

MERCHANT: (*As if talking to a child*) That's five more than I have.

He digs in his cart. Pulls out pieces of a body, assembles it, then ties a rope around its wrist.

THIRD SHEPHERD: What is it?

MERCHANT: I'll demonstrate.

He pulls the rope and it falls on all fours and crawls about the stage.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It crawls on all fours—it's a dog.

The MERCHANT pulls the cord. It slowly stands up.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It can stand on two legs—it's a bird.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Dogs can stand on their hind legs.

MERCHANT: It takes it a while to adjust.

It takes a few steps, falls back to all fours, then flat on the ground. It writhes, trying to orient itself.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It writhes like a fish, maybe it swims.

MERCHANT: It floats, but won't swim unless we teach it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: There's no water for it to swim in; what good is it?

MERCHANT: Watch.

The figure stands, walks about.

MERCHANT: What do you need shepherds?

The Shepherds look at each other.

FIRST SHEPHERD: There isn't enough grass for our sheep.

MERCHANT: Sow the field.

The figure begins to sow the field.

MERCHANT: It'll work until we tell it to stop.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's a remarkable device.

MERCHANT: I've sold them east and west, during droughts, wars—they're very practical.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It can't do our work—it's not qualified.

MERCHANT: Watch.

FIRST SHEPHERD: But it can't change the weather?

MERCHANT: When demand is low and supply is high is the best time to buy.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Buy the weather?

MERCHANT: How long have you all been out here today? Dawn, earlier? Do you ever think that all you do is endure and endure, and wait. But, what are you waiting for? My device *works* for you. Does whatever you tell it. Why submit patiently? Let *it* be patient instead of you.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We wouldn't have to work?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It can't change the weather. It can't grow grass from nothing.

MERCHANT: It stands a better chance than you do. And, when the weather improves, everyone will want one; I've seen it a million times. But I can't build enough for everyone, so they go to the highest bidders; buy now, and you're in on the ground floor.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Ground floor?

SECOND SHEPHERD (*to* THIRD SHEPHERD): The lowest price, idiot!

MERCHANT (*Sardonic*): Exactly.

FIRST SHEPHERD: And in the meantime?

MERCHANT: You have another body working for you, with you.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It makes sense.

THIRD SHEPHERD (*ponderously*): Submit...

FIRST SHEPHERD: But, we have no money. Can't you see? What do we barter, our robes?

MERCHANT (*giving his robe a withering look*): Keep your robes. Maybe you have nothing now, but with it's help, you will. If I can guarantee that soon you will have plenty, my price will seem minuscule, a mere formality. There's no way to pay when you have nothing, so let's make this quick; take him now, and pay me later.

ii.

Merchant's Factory

The MERCHANT's factory is filled with medieval devices. Large wheels with ropes that attach to pulleys and cranks, dumb waiters and scales, a pair of legs walking on their own. The machinery moves slowly. The MERCHANT is coughed out of a tube covered in soot. He staggers over to his cart, and accidentally tips it over. The body parts scramble around on their own.

MERCHANT: Damn it!

Rushes to clean up the parts.

MERCHANT: I knew he'd be late. He has no concept of—

One of the gears begins to sputter, an arm falls onto his head, and he drops to the floor. A giant gear rolls by, almost running him over.

MERCHANT (*indignant*): That almost took my head off!

Some of the dummies play music. Two Ping-Pong balls enter from the wings. They bounce to center, mirroring each other. A hand and a foot enter from left and right and approach the balls. The hand swipes at the air trying to catch the ball. The foot kicks at the air trying to catch the other ball.

MERCHANT (*simultaneously with the action*): Another wasted day.

He goes to a corner of his laboratory and wheels a giant telescope to center. He peers into the telescope. A screen descends from above. An image is out of focus.

MERCHANT: Just a little out of focus.

He focuses the viewfinder, and the image on the screen becomes focused. The image of the body working becomes clear. MERCHANT's ASSISTANT climbs quietly out the tube covered in soot, carrying a sack. MERCHANT doesn't notice her sneaking up behind him.

MERCHANT: The leg looks like it's gone limp; but, it's still working. I'll have to give him a happy face—

ASSISTANT: Why don't you paint my face on it?

MERCHANT wheels around knocking the telescope. The image on the screen tilts up and down. His glasses fall to the floor.

MERCHANT: Where were you? You said you'd be finished by the time I got back.

ASSISTANT: You're early.

MERCHANT (*looks at her. Realizes his glasses are missing*): You knocked off my glasses.

ASSISTANT: I didn't touch them.

MERCHANT (*Begins to look for his glasses, but quickly gives up*): What did you bring?

ASSISTANT: There wasn't much to choose from.

MERCHANT *grabs a sack from her.*

MERCHANT (*Pulls out a shoe*): One shoe?

ASSISTANT: There really wasn't—

MERCHANT: Missing the laces.

ASSISTANT: I stole it.

MERCHANT: From an amputee? One stick.

ASSISTANT: It's been whittled.

MERCHANT: Barely. That's it?!

ASSISTANT: I almost got caught.

MERCHANT: At least they'll feed you, if they catch you.

ASSISTANT: What about you? (*rummages in the wagon*) Which one did you sell them?

MERCHANT: The one with the crooked leg.

ASSISTANT: The one that can barely walk?

MERCHANT: It won't have to walk.

ASSISTANT: How much did you get for it?

MERCHANT (*Irate*): Exactly what it's worth.

ASSISTANT: You *gave* it to them?!

MERCHANT: They're going to try it out, then when they have something to give—

ASSISTANT: That doesn't make any sense.

MERCHANT: Of course it doesn't! But, as long as they believe it, they'll work doubly hard, even though they think they're only doing half the work. I don't see you making any sales.

ASSISTANT: Do you want me to?

MERCHANT: You'd botch it, and I'd have to clean up after you.

ASSISTANT (*finds the glasses*): Here.

She puts them on the Merchant.

Look for yourself. (*In reference to the wagon that she has just straightened up*)

MERCHANT: Don't think you're free just yet.

ASSISTANT: What else should I do?

MERCHANT: I want to sit down.

ASSISTANT (*Wheels over a chair*): Sit.

Assistant moves to the telescope.

MERCHANT: What are you doing? Don't even think of touching it.

ASSISTANT: I know how to use it.

ASSISTANT *noticing something happening on the screen: the image is blurred, the PLAYERS are swarming over the body.*

ASSISTANT: What's going on?

MERCHANT: What?

ASSISTANT: In the telescope.

MERCHANT: You'll break it.

ASSISTANT: Look something is happening.

MERCHANT *rushes to the telescope. Knocks over the ASSISTANT. He focuses the image. The body is lying on the ground.*

MERCHANT: I told you not to touch it.

ASSISTANT (*holding her rib*): What happened?

MERCHANT: I don't know.

ASSISTANT: Is it broken?

MERCHANT: Hold on.

ASSISTANT: I would've seen it coming if you'd let me.

MERCHANT: You have work to do.

ASSISTANT: What's wrong with it?

MERCHANT: It's not moving.

ASSISTANT: You didn't have to push me.

MERCHANT: Don't be theatrical. What did you see?

ASSISTANT: It was out of focus.

MERCHANT: He doesn't even know how to focus.

ASSISTANT: You don't build them right anymore. That one had to walk on all fours because the legs were uneven.

MERCHANT: It was building a tunnel; it didn't need to stand up. We have to fix this one tonight, regardless of how it was built.

ASSISTANT: And what about the one with three legs?

MERCHANT: I was sick. I should have been in bed; that was your fault. You're no help. I work myself to the bone, and what do you do? Come late, sneak up on me—

ASSISTANT: Why don't you just tell them we'll build them a new one, free of charge?

MERCHANT: You don't sell someone defective merchandise unless you're just passing through town, which doesn't apply to us at the moment.

ASSISTANT: You already gave them the first one.

MERCHANT: I'm not letting you build it.

ASSISTANT: I won't be late again. Look; I'll show you I can build one.

She rushes over to a pile of body parts. As she wades through them they begin to spasm and move. She assembles a head to a torso and an arm to a shoulder.

MERCHANT: Could you save this for another time?

MERCHANT tries to take apart the body, they wrestle over it. MERCHANT pulls ASSISTANT away with a hand tightly clasped on his leg. His glasses are missing.

MERCHANT: Get it off me.

She gently removes the hand.

ASSISTANT: I don't see what the big deal is.

MERCHANT: If they think I tricked them...

ASSISTANT: Here we go.

MERCHANT: They'll report us. Then, we'll get the glove, the Iron Gauntlet. Or the Thummikins—

ASSISTANT: He calls me theatrical—

MERCHANT: The Scavengers Daughter, the Tosots, the Long Irnis, Piquet, Bilboes, Iron collar—

ASSISTANT: I think I had an aunt named Irnis—

MERCHANT: The Brodequin from France—

ASSISTANT: An import?

MERCHANT (*ignoring her*) Or the new apparatus. 'The Box'. I've heard they have to rotate the operators to keep them from passing out from the smell. They probably have no taste buds left. If I were ever faced with it, if I ever saw it placed in front of me, or rather me in front of it...no more instant death for us; that was mercy...

ASSISTANT: There're no boxes here.

MERCHANT (*unrelenting*): And what is left of the condemned? The tongue, torn from the mouth, stretched and wriggling; the body, rived into a spectacle of parts.

Pause

MERCHANT: You have to go fix it.

Silent

MERCHANT: We need it done as soon as possible.

ASSISTANT: Why me?

MERCHANT: I'll watch you from here.

ASSISTANT (*Ironic*): Very motivating.

MERCHANT: Think about it on your way.

ASSISTANT: But the tube is all dirty.

MERCHANT: Get in.

Pause

MERCHANT: We've just moved here, so we've got to do a good job.

ASSISTANT: I'll go if you promise to let me build the next one.

MERCHANT: Fine, fine.

ASSISTANT: I'm sorry I snuck up on you.

MERCHANT: Okay, if everything is running smoothly then you can build the next one.

ASSISTANT: Promise me and I'll go.

MERCHANT: Fine, I promise, now go quickly.

ASSISTANT *gets into tube and is spat away.*

MERCHANT *hurriedly wheels out a torso on a stand. In front of the torso a pair of legs. He works on the waist when an arm extends itself abruptly. He pulls down the arm and another extends. He grabs it and the first begins to move again. He wraps his arms around the entire torso.*

The legs begin to walk away. He releases the arms and grabs the legs. The arms extend at a 180 degrees. The moment he grabs the legs, the arms go limp. He turns back to the arms, and the legs begin to walk away again. As he rushes back to the legs, one of the arms grabs his buttocks. He spins around the torso.

MERCHANT: Hold still.

On the screen the ASSISTANT appears. She pokes the body, but it does not move. Shadows appear over the ASSISTANT and she looks up. She suddenly runs away, chased by the Players. The telescope attempts to fix on the group but can't get a clear image. MERCHANT looks frightened. Rushes to the tube. Stops.

MERCHANT: What was that?

Rushes back to the telescope. Looks back as if he were forgetting something. Takes a step and a crunch is heard. He bends over and picks up his glasses. He puts them on, the lenses are shattered.

He rushes the wrong way, crashes into one of the bodies, it grabs him and they roll around on the floor. They roll into one of the pulleys, and start it in motion. All the devices begin to move.

He struggles with the body and finally releases himself. He puts his glasses on one of the mannequins.

MERCHANT: I'll have to manage without them.

He takes slow cautious steps towards the tube. Feels for the rim. Falls in and is sucked away.

A moment later. On screen: MERCHANT appears. He runs around frantically. He holds the motionless body in his arms. Distressed, he runs off screen.

ACT II

i.

Back at the Field

The Shepherds scuttle in from left.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's freezing out here.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's only going to take a second.

THIRD SHEPHERD: It's dark and I missed dinner.

FIRST SHEPHERD: My dinner was horrible: potatoes with potatoes.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I could eat some potatoes.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Once we make sure it's working, then you can both go back to your potatoes.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What if we have to do this every night?

SECOND SHEPHERD: With this thing's help we'll be eating apples and pears and meat, and thick slices of bread with honey. We won't have to come here unless we *feel* like it. What's the point, as the Merchant said, to endure and endure.

THIRD SHEPHERD (*wistfully*): Apples and honey?

SECOND SHEPHERD (*trying to remember*): He said, "What if something could do it for us, there's no crime, nothing to worry about, there are many people enjoying an easy, easy life that we secure for them, by toiling and toiling." That's what he said, and he's right.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I'd be happy with a decent meal.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*loudly*): This body will endure for us, and count the grass and—

THIRD SHEPHERD: I can count the grass.

FIRST SHEPHERD: If the weather improved...

SECOND SHEPHERD: What difference does it make? So the weather improves, and again we're sitting, waiting, dozing—didn't you hear what I was saying?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I thought this thing was just going to help us—

THIRD SHEPHERD: Submit—

FIRST SHEPHERD: We can still say we don't want it?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's too late, we own it. There's nothing to discuss.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*sees the Body lying on the ground*): What's it doing?

THIRD SHEPHERD: Where?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Over there lying on the ground.

SECOND SHEPHERD: ...on the ground?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Over there.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What's it doing on the ground?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Lying. It's over there lying on the ground.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Perhaps it's counting.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Did the Merchant say anything about this?

FIRST SHEPHERD: He said to pay later.

THIRD SHEPHERD: He said it was a type of fish.

SECOND SHEPHERD: No. about what to do if it's just lying there?

THIRD SHEPHERD: What would we do with a fish?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Throw it back into the water.

THIRD SHEPHERD: But there isn't any water.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's not a fish, he said it *wasn't* a fish.

THIRD SHEPHERD: But if it's not a fish, what is it?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Go look at it.

THIRD SHEPHERD *approaches it. Pokes it, and they all recoil. He goes closer and touches it. He runs his hand along its body.*

THIRD SHEPHERD: It's cold.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Wasn't it always cold?

THIRD SHEPHERD: We didn't touch it before.

The other Shepherds crowd around it.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Doesn't want to move.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Does it see you?

THIRD SHEPHERD (*to the Body*): Can you see me? What did it say?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It spoke?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I didn't hear anything.

FIRST SHEPHERD *to* THIRD SHEPHERD: What did you hear?

THIRD SHEPHERD: I don't know. I think it said something.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It didn't say anything, it doesn't have a mouth.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Then it's not fish.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He called it a thing.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Can it feel you?

THIRD SHEPHERD: How could we tell?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It has no mouth so it can't speak; it has no eyes so it can't see; no ears; can't hear...

SECOND SHEPHERD: I'm going to pinch it, and if it moves, we'll know it can feel.
One...two...

THIRD SHEPHERD: Where are its eyes?

SECOND SHEPHERD *To* FIRST SHEPHERD: Shut him up! On the count of three.
One...two...three.

He pinches it, and all three recoil. They scurry left. All of them hide their faces in their hands.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*through his fingers*): Did it move?

THIRD SHEPHERD (*with his hands covering his eyes*): I can't see.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I think it just moved

FIRST SHEPHERD: What did it do?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I think it jumped, wasn't it lying over there before?

FIRST SHEPHERD: No, it's in the same place.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Maybe it jumped there, then back.

THIRD SHEPHERD: You hurt it.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Did you hurt it?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It doesn't look hurt.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's just lying there.

SECOND SHEPHERD: But, it was lying there before.

SECOND SHEPHERD *moves slowly back to the body, the others follow*

THIRD SHEPHERD: If it doesn't remember, then how does it do work?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I didn't build it.

THIRD SHEPHERD: It hasn't moved.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What have we done? What'll the Merchant say?

THIRD SHEPHERD: You killed it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It hasn't moved, therefore, I didn't do anything to it.

FIRST SHEPHERD: He'll want us to pay him.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He's just a Merchant, what'll he do?

FIRST SHEPHERD (*Sombre*): He'll make us pay him.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What are you talking about?

FIRST SHEPHERD: We made a verbal agreement.

SECOND SHEPHERD: But, it hasn't done any work for us.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We agreed, he heard us, we said it, we witnessed it, now the thing is just lying there.

THIRD SHEPHERD: It could be watching us.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Be quiet.

THIRD SHEPHERD: It'll remember that we pinched it.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We said we'd pay later, but if it can't make us any money, we'll have nothing to pay with.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We'll get the rack.

Silence

We have to do something.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Let's take it home.

SECOND SHEPHERD *to* First SHEPHERD (*Desperately*): Think.

Silence

SECOND SHEPHERD: If he finds it here, like this, we'll have to pay for it now. And if it's not here, he'll think that we stole it.

FIRST SHEPHERD: But if he finds it, as it is now, he'll think that we broke it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Help me lift.

THIRD SHEPHERD: We can nurse it back to health.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What if it's diseased?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Worry about that later.

FIRST SHEPHERD *goes over to it. The two of them lift it up.*

Stage left MERCHANT *appears.*

MERCHANT: What do they want with you? It's too dark to see anything.

He notices the Shepherds. Ducks behind a bush.

They've come to check. They won't pay me. They'll make me pay them! I have to mollify them.

He starts, then pauses.

Where did you go? Stupid waif. They'll rack us both.

MERCHANT *runs off left, before exiting he bumps into some trees, and scurries off.*

THIRD SHEPHERD: I heard something.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Me too.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I didn't hear anything.

THIRD SHEPHERD: It moved.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*rushes to the Body*): It didn't. (*To THIRD SHEPHERD*) Do we have to gag you? Now what do we do with it? (*In reference to the body*)

FIRST SHEPHERD: We need to make him think that it's still working.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Obviously. (*Thinks*) Why?

FIRST SHEPHERD: If he thinks it's still working, he'll give us more time until we have to pay him.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Obviously.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why doesn't one of us pretend to be the thing, and that way when he sees it, he'll think it's still working.

SECOND SHEPHERD *to* FIRST SHEPHERD: Yes. You pretend.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why me?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It doesn't matter who it is.

FIRST SHEPHERD: You do it then.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I'll have to talk to the Merchant.

THIRD SHEPHERD: We should just fix him ourselves.

Both turn to THIRD SHEPHERD.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Help me undress him.

The two strip THIRD SHEPHERD down to his underwear.

SECOND SHEPHERD: *We'll* figure out what to do with the thing.

THIRD SHEPHERD: What should *I* do?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Put your clothes on it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Yes, then he won't know who's who.

THIRD SHEPHERD *Begins to dress the Body.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: Not like that. Is that how you wear your robe?

THIRD SHEPHERD: Sometimes, when I'm around the house—

FIRST SHEPHERD: Let me do it.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Be careful with my belt, it doesn't buckle very—

FIRST SHEPHERD: This belt is too loose.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Let me—

SECOND SHEPHERD: No, you have to be the thing.

THIRD SHEPHERD: But, what do I do if I'm the thing?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Forget the belt, it doesn't need it. (*He tosses it away*)

FIRST SHEPHERD: Just act like the thing acts.

THIRD SHEPHERD *lies down.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: No, not now, not like it is now, before it broke.

THIRD SHEPHERD: What did it do before it broke?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It worked.

THIRD SHEPHERD: But can I see?

FIRST SHEPHERD: You don't have eyes.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Close your eyes.

THIRD SHEPHERD: How can I work if my eyes are closed?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Use your hands to feel.

THIRD SHEPHERD: But, how do we know it feels?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It has to feel to work.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We are assuming, for the sake of argument, that the body can feel.
Even if it can't, it doesn't matter, because you can't tell by looking at it whether it
can feel or not.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I'm cold without my clothes. I can feel that.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It doesn't feel the cold.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Would the body move his arm like this?

SECOND SHEPHERD: What does it matter?

THIRD SHEPHERD: If I'm the thing, I should know how it moves.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Try like this. (*He demonstrates a gesture*)

THIRD SHEPHERD *Does the gesture.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: It didn't move like that. It had a strange walk. Try like this.

THIRD SHEPHERD *imitates the gesture.*

FIRST SHEPHERD: It didn't walk like that, try this way.

THIRD SHEPHERD *imitates it.*

THIRD SHEPHERD: But, can I hear? Because if I can't, then...

FIRST SHEPHERD: You don't have ears—

SECOND SHEPHERD: You don't have eyes—

FIRST SHEPHERD: You don't have a mouth.

THIRD SHEPHERD *looks as if he is about to say something, but stops himself. He looks at his hands, at his feet with a pained expression.*

FIRST SHEPHERD: Don't worry, it's not forever.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What should we do with this? *(In reference to the body)*

FIRST SHEPHERD: It'll have to act like him.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Shouldn't be too much of a stretch.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Just hold him between us like this.

The two shepherds hold the body between them. They practice walking, moving their arms.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Cover its face.

Stage right, MERCHANT enters. He frantically looks about.

MERCHANT: I hope they left. They didn't want it in the first place.

He walks center. Looks up. Casually turns and walks left.

They saw me. He'll have to fend for himself.

FIRST SHEPHERD: He's here.

SECOND SHEPHERD: How much do you think he saw?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I don't know.

MERCHANT *(walks back to center)*: Good evening shepherds.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Yes, it's a good evening.

MERCHANT: ...what brings you out at this hour of the night, gentlemen?

FIRST SHEPHERD: We came to check on the—

SECOND SHEPHERD *(pulling him to the side)*: No, you can't tell him that, it will make him think that we are suspicious, and if he thinks we suspect him, then he'll suspect us.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What are you talking about, I don't understand a word you're saying.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Just let me talk.

MERCHANT *aside, squinting at the THIRD SHEPHERD who is dressed as the body and pretending to work.*

MERCHANT (*Out of ear shot from the shepherds*): You seem to be working now. You look a little off, but you're moving. Maybe it was some kind of shock; I knew I built this one right.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It is a nice night, isn't it?

MERCHANT: Splendid! How long have you all been out here for?

FIRST SHEPHERD: About one hour—

SECOND SHEPHERD: Only a few minutes, we just arrived, as a matter of fact.

MERCHANT: And you came all the way out here to see it working?

FIRST SHEPHERD: We were nearby, so...we... (*to FIRST SHEPHERD*) Right?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Absolutely, we weren't suspicious at all.

MERCHANT: Of what?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I mean, we weren't worried about...we were carefree, it is a carefree kind of night...wouldn't you say?

The Body, now dressed up as the THIRD SHEPHERD, who was standing in one place behind the shepherds suddenly falls to the ground. Only the MERCHANT can see.

MERCHANT: What's wrong with your friend?

FIRST SHEPHERD: What do you mean?

SECOND SHEPHERD: He's fine, a little tired tonight, but otherwise in good spirits.

MERCHANT: He just fell over.

MERCHANT *tries to rush over, but is blocked by shepherds.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: He's fine, he just gets tired sometimes.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*ejaculating*): He's a narcoleptic.

MERCHANT: A what?

FIRST SHEPHERD: A narcoleptic, he falls asleep suddenly. He gets these fits, but it's nothing to worry about.

MERCHANT: So you're just going to leave him like that?

FIRST SHEPHERD: You can't touch him when he gets an attack.

MERCHANT: But he might have hurt his head.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It happens all the time; sometimes we get it, too.

FIRST SHEPHERD *collapses*.

SECOND SHEPHERD: See, now he has it. We all have this syndrome.

MERCHANT: Its not contagious, is it?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Very contagious, first he got it, then him. then me.

MERCHANT: Maybe that's what happened to the body.

FIRST SHEPHERD: The body?

SECOND SHEPHERD: What happened to the body?

MERCHANT (*referring to the FIRST SHEPHERD*): Now he's awake?

SECOND SHEPHERD: No he's not.

He kicks him.

MERCHANT: But I just heard him speak.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What did you say about the thing?

MERCHANT: The what?

SECOND SHEPHERD: The thing. (*points to THIRD SHEPHERD*) The Thing!

MERCHANT: Nothing. I was worried for a moment that you might have given your disease to the body.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's fine now. Take a look yourself. It's hard at work.

MERCHANT: You'll have to show me a little closer, my glasses are missing, and I've been worried.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Worried about what—what's wrong with it?

MERCHANT: Nothing's wrong with it, you even said so yourself; unless you think there is something wrong with it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: No, no, it's wonderful, as I said, a remarkable device.

SECOND SHEPHERD *leads* MERCHANT *to the* THIRD SHEPHERD.

SECOND SHEPHERD: See; he's working.

MERCHANT: It's not a "he".

SECOND SHEPHERD: Let me demonstrate, "Work you dog."

The THIRD SHEPHERD *sits*.

MERCHANT: It stopped.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Maybe he didn't hear me correctly.

THIRD SHEPHERD *approaches* SECOND SHEPHERD *and whispers*.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*whispering*): Yes, you can hear, remember what we told you.

THIRD SHEPHERD *lets out a whimper*.

MERCHANT: Did it speak?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Of course it didn't speak.

MERCHANT: Who were you talking to, then?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I was talking...to you. Can't you hear, or are you deaf, too?

MERCHANT: What did you say to it? I heard you say something.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I said, to you, "why isn't it moving?" *it is your thing*.

MERCHANT: It's yours. You bought it and gave it some disease—

FIRST SHEPHERD: Condition.

MERCHANT: Who said that?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I said it's a condition.

MERCHANT: What's a condition?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Necrophelia. [sic]

MERCHANT: You said it was a syndrome.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Forget what I said, the creature doesn't have it.

MERCHANT: Prove it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: How can I prove it, you sold it to me. You sold me faulty merchandise.

MERCHANT: You just said it was working splendidly.

The THIRD SHEPHERD stands up and begins to perform gesture as demonstrated earlier.

MERCHANT: What's it doing?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's doing what it did before.

MERCHANT: Before when?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Before we bought it.

MERCHANT: How do you know what it was doing before you bought it?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I just assumed, that that's what it does, therefore, that's also what it did before.

MERCHANT: It never does *this*.

MERCHANT imitates the gesture.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Look, it's not doing it anymore. What are you aiming at? You're not trying to renege on the deal are you?

MERCHANT: Of course not, but you wouldn't be hiding his condition, would you?

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's a syndrome.

MERCHANT: "He's" performing an odd motion; I've never seen it do that before, so I just want to make sure that he doesn't have this condition.

SECOND SHEPHERD: How can I assure you he doesn't have it?

MERCHANT: You do know that if you purchased it, knowing full well that you had this contagious condition, what could happen to you.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Let me prove it to you. I'll make it do anything humanly possible. just give a request—

FIRST SHEPHERD *moans disapprovingly* SECOND SHEPHERD *kick* FIRST SHEPHERD.

MERCHANT: I'm trying to find someone.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Your son?

MERCHANT: No, my Assistant. I don't have any children.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Where did you lose him?

MERCHANT: / didn't lose him...he got lost when...he's disappeared and I want you to command the body to go find him.

SECOND SHEPHERD: But, why send the body?

MERCHANT: There is a new apparatus called the Box.

SECOND SHEPHERD: The Box?

MERCHANT: It's worse than all the others. It has anthropomorphic fingers.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Worse than the rack—

MERCHANT: The image of compassion!

SECOND SHEPHERD: When did they build this device?

MERCHANT: Order the body to find him.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*weakly to the* THIRD SHEPHERD): Go, and find his boy.

The THIRD SHEPHERD looks desperately at SECOND SHEPHERD.

MERCHANT: I thought you said it was working perfectly; usually they respond quite quickly.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*almost whispering into The THIRD SHEPHERD's ear*): Just wander around through the woods and this nightmare will be finished, but do it now or you know what will happen.

The THIRD SHEPHERD looks desperately around then heads off into the woods.

SECOND SHEPHERD: There, you have your proof.

MERCHANT: We'll see if anything turns up.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I know it will.

MERCHANT: You should tend to your sleeping friends.

Exit MERCHANT.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why did you make that bargain? We're in enough trouble as it is.

SECOND SHEPHERD: You were a lot of help pretending to be asleep. What is necrophilia?

FIRST SHEPHERD: A condition, and it's not contagious.

SECOND SHEPHERD: You might have mentioned that instead of passing out suddenly.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Now we're stuck with this thing, and you've sent the other one off into the woods thinking he has no eyes or ears.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He'll find that stupid boy, and then we'll get the money he owes us.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We owe him—he doesn't owe us anything.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He'll find him. For now we have to figure out what to do with this thing.

FIRST SHEPHERD: He called it a "body". What are we going to tell his wife, we transformed him into a body with no eyes, that's looking for someone he's never seen.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*goes over to the body*): Work, you dog.

The body does not move.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I said work.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's obviously defective.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Work, you stupid thing—you grotesque body!

He kicks it. The body flops onto its side.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Just leave it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: His bodies are all fakes.

FIRST SHEPHERD: He's obviously some kind of scam artist.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We've been taken.

Act III

i.

REEM *enters from left. He is having difficulty with his lines. He moves his lips as if performing an incantation. He walks to center. Pauses. Looks at the ground. Pauses. Looks up. Pauses.*

REEM: "Marquis, rentys, and powndys.
Great castels and groundys."

"groundys rentys markys, great powd...?
Popetys and pap-hawkys I xal puttyn in peyne
Tyl rybbys be to-rent with a reed ray!
Lord, we han spad
As e bad:
Barnis ben blad
lyn in dych!"

I'll be l-y-n in a dy-ch.

If I don't find the script
I'll be l-y-ing in a di-tch
that's for sure.

Dy-ch...glitch. hitch, snitch...a ha!

I'll be lying in a ditch
the night black as...

I'll be lying in the pitch
the night as black as...wait...

From left enters a large wagon pulled by two men.

REEM: Just think, I'm lying in a *snitch*. I can't believe I lost the script.

The wagon moves slowly, the weight is immense, the two men (FLOP and CLAP) take breaks every second step. The wagon reaches center stage. BOUND climbs out of one of the compartments in the wagon.

BOUND: Are we all here?

REEM: We should check, before we begin.

BOUND: And how should we do that?

REEM: We can all call out our names, and whoever isn't here, will remain silent.

BOUND: Do we all agree to that?

FLOP: But, we need to know *if* we are all here, before we can take a vote on anything.

CLAP: He raises a good point.

BOUND: Do we all agree?

REEM: I don't mean to be discouraging—

BOUND: Are you starting again?

REEM: No, not starting anything, forget it. Continue.

BOUND: Very well. Do we all agree?

FLOP: About what?

BOUND: About—

CLAP: He *does* raise a good question.

REEM: We were trying to decide—

BOUND: What did I just say?

REEM: I'm not starting, my apologies again.

BOUND: Are we all here?

FLOP: That is what we were initially struggling over.

CLAP: Yes, initially, that was our struggle.

BOUND: Well I believe we've passed that struggle, and onto a different struggle. Do we all agree?

ALL *minus* REEM: Agreed.

BOUND *to* REEM: And you, pouting now?

Flop *to* REEM: We already agreed, if you miss it, it's your problem.

CLAP: You should say nay, if you do not agree, that way we know—

REEM: I agree, I'm sorry, I am in entire agreement.

BOUND: It's too late for that—you'll just have to be mature about the decision.

REEM: Fine.

FLOP: Shall we begin the play?

BOUND: Unless there is any reason why we shouldn't begin.

REEM: We still don't know if we're all here.

CLAP: That is a good reason, given that we require a cast for rehearsal.

BOUND: Who is not here?

Silence

Excellent.

FLOP: Where's the script?

REEM: That's not an accurate measure; those who aren't here won't say anything.

CLAP: Yes, this is true too, it seems that both tactics have succeeded and failed at the same time.

BOUND: Who is here?

ALL: Me.

BOUND: Names

REEM: REEM.

FLOP: FLOP.

CLAP: CLAP.

BOUND: BOUND. Then who is missing?

REEM: The boy.

BOUND: Where is he?

FLOP: Still in the wagon.

BOUND: Why didn't he say anything?

REEM: We gagged him.

BOUND: Why did we gag him?

FLOP: So he'd stop screaming.

REEM: He wasn't very cooperative.

BOUND: Someone fetch him.

All three look towards REEM.

REEM: You've already made me gag and beat him; I'm not getting him.

FLOP: You didn't really beat him.

REEM: I didn't want to ruin his performance.

BOUND: Should we vote?

REEM: No, I'm going.

He goes to the back of the wagon. Carries ASSISTANT center, and dumps her onto the ground. ASSISTANT, bound and gagged, squirms on the ground.

BOUND to ASSISTANT: Have you learned your lines?

Silence

FLOP: He's not answering.

CLAP: He still hasn't learned them.

BOUND: Is this true? You still haven't learned your lines.

ASSISTANT attempts to speak, but can't.

BOUND: What's the matter with him?

REEM: He's trying to say something.

CLAP: He's moving his head.

BOUND *To* ASSISTANT: Speak.

FLOP *kicks her.*

CLAP: He's been gagged.

BOUND: Who gagged him?

REEM: You told me to gag him.

FLOP: So he would stop yelling.

BOUND: Take off the gag.

REEM: What if he starts screaming again? (*moving to ASSISTANT's head.*) Will you scream?

ASSISTANT *shakes her head.*

BOUND: Remove the gag.

REEM *removes the gag.* ASSISTANT *yells.*

FLOP: He's yelling.

CLAP: We should have voted.

REEM *hold his ears.*

BOUND: Replace the gag.

REEM *gags* ASSISTANT.

BOUND: You liar.

REEM: Maybe he was in pain?

BOUND: Are you in pain?

ASSISTANT *nods.*

BOUND: Then stay quiet or you'll be in more pain.

REEM: *You 'll* have to beat him this time. I've had enough beatings for one day.

BOUND: No one's beaten you.

REEM: I meant, I've given enough beatings today.

BOUND: Are you starting again?

REEM *to* ASSISTANT: It'll be easier if you stay quiet; I'm going to remove the gag; just try to suck up the pain.

He removes the gag. She is quiet, although in pain.

There, that's a good boy.

BOUND: No more screaming, unless it's in the script.

FLOP: Where is the script?

CLAP: Reem was reading it last.

FLOP: He's the only one who can read.

REEM: Did you leave it in the wagon? (*The script*)

BOUND: Who?

REEM *to* FLOP: You left it with the boy in the Wagon.

CLAP: Sounds rather dubious.

FLOP: Why would I be looking at the script? I can't read.

REEM: You were learning—I was teaching you.

FLOP *to* ASSISTANT: Is this true?

ASSISTANT: I...

REEM looks desperately at her.

ASSISTANT: Maybe. It was a *script*. Well, yes it was with...him...(Points to FLOP.)

BOUND *to* FLOP: Get the script then.

FLOP looks in the wagon.

FLOP (*from behind wagon.*): He's lying. (*Emerges from wagon.*) He lies to compensate.

He grabs the ASSISTANT's head. ASSISTANT looks desperately at Reem, who grins weakly and turns away.

FLOP: He tried to frame me.

He throws ASSISTANT to the ground. Winds up to kick her. BOUND grabs his leg.

BOUND: Don't mangle him yet. We need him for the performance.

CLAP: But we have no script.

REEM: We never used it, anyway.

BOUND: You be quiet.

FLOP: Then how will we rehearse?

BOUND: The same as always.

CLAP: First we try to remember the story, then we choose our roles. And then we perform.

BOUND: At least one of us can remember.

FLOP: So tell us the story, since you have a memory.

CLAP: The play...

REEM: The Slaughter of The Innocents.

CLAP: Begins with a man...um...

REEM: Herod

CLAP: Herod, who isn't very fond of children—

REEM: Hardly, yes, go on.

FLOP: This does sound a bit familiar.

BOUND: Then what?

FLOP: Who will be Herod?

BOUND: I'll be Herod.

REEM (*Quietly*): Who else?

BOUND: And what is Herod?

CLAP: He's tired.

BOUND: Why is he tired?

CLAP: He's tired of being afraid.

BOUND: Sounds noble. What does the good man do about it?

CLAP: He decides to kill the children.

BOUND: ...*all* of them?

CLAP: Absolutely all of them.

BOUND: ...Well...who will play the children?

FLOP (*Eagerly*): You, the little liar, will be the children.

ASSISTANT begins to yell.

REEM: He's doing it again.

BOUND: Put back the gag.

REEM: Where's the gag?

FLOP: Use this.

He pulls out a soiled handkerchief and winces at the smell. Hands it to REEM who also winces as he stuffs it into the ASSISTANT's mouth.

BOUND: That's better. Who are the other characters?

CLAP: Herod's knights.

FLOP: What do they do?

CLAP: They carry out Herod's orders.

FLOP: What were his orders?

REEM: To kill the children.

FLOP: Do knights have to read?

REEM: They slaughter the innocents, hence the name of the play: The Slaughter of the Innocents.

FLOP: Where's my sword?

CLAP: I wasn't finished.

BOUND: Hurry up then, what else happens?

CLAP: Well...they kill them.

REEM: You've told us that part already.

CLAP: Then...well...Herod sings a happy song.

BOUND: I like it.

FLOP: Let's begin.

BOUND *to* REEM: Tell us the words.

REEM: The words?

BOUND: You're the only one who remembers the words.

REEM: Alright, well, begin with:
Pain of limb and land
Stone ye stand
Carping record of lof and lout.

BOUND (*with grandeur*): Carping record of lof and lout
Now's not the time to pout.
Limbs and land!

Shallow applause from the rest. He takes a bow. FLOP ducks behind wagon.

BOUND: With reverence and renown
Go and to the town.
And slay the innocents.

Flop (*emerges with a sword*): Lord, what likes to do
all folk will be full fain.
It's a great idea,
The innocents are to blame!

Flop *bows. Shallow applause.*

CLAP: I'll be a messenger. (*To REEM*) Line.

REEM: In faith full fast
I heard and took heed
How that they went all three
Into their own country.

CLAP: In full faith
the three went.
All three into their own country.

BOUND: Oh, I tire.
Tired of these three
Who went afar into their own country.
I'll send my knights to kill them
Then back to business as usual.

Very shallow applause

Wait, I've already sent my knights
Send more knights.

CLAP: More?

REEM: Now the knights slay the innocents.

FLOP: Time for the slaughter.

ASSISTANT *ducks the sword. Flop grabs her hat. Her long hair falls around her shoulders.*

BOUND: What have you done?

FLOP: It's in the script.

CLAP (*staring*): That's not in the script.

REEM: This isn't an innocent.

ASSISTANT *squirms out of reach.*

FLOP: It's getting away.

REEM: Let her go.

ASSISTANT *sneaks off, bleeding.*

REEM: I knew it would come to this.

BOUND: Shut up, you.

REEM: *She* was your idea. Thought it would be *great* for the pageant.

CLAP: It *was* a good idea.

BOUND: How was I supposed to know it wasn't a boy?

CLAP: It was a good idea, at the time.

FLOP: What's wrong with using a girl?

BOUND: When do I get to sing my song.

REEM: You don't. Herod doesn't sing.

BOUND: But, I do. (*Sings*):
The heart of Man can hardly know
How love of us has bound.

ii.

Enter THIRD SHEPHERD. He is covered in dirt. He scurries stage left then back. He runs to center, peers out into the audience.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I wish I had a potato. Potatoes with potatoes would be fine. They don't even have to be cooked. I'd crunch them like apples. "We'll be eating apple's and pears." He's lied to me before.

Pause

I should be quiet. "You don't have a mouth so no talking." But, I heard that. "You don't have ears, so no hearing." But, I said that. If I don't have eyes, can I imagine a potato?

Pause

How will I find him?

Pause

I'm so hungry. They didn't tell me if I had a stomach. Do I eat?

Pause

No eyes, no stomach, no seeing.

He closes his eyes. He walks gingerly.

I just have to sense where I'm going.

Stumbles.

Feel where I'm going. That's it. But, if I'm me, how can I walk without seeing? I am walking.

Opens his eyes.

Now I can see. I'm seeing, and walking.

Closes his eyes.

Now I can't see, yet I walk. If I can walk without seeing...and also walk and see, then which am I? Maybe I *am* it. He said, "it's not forever." He's lied to me before.

Pause

Is it "I" or is it "it"? I can walk without seeing. How will I know? I'll go home, and If I am *not* there, I will know I'm *me*. But, if I see myself there, I will know it is not me, and from then on I won't speak anymore.

He walks slowly off.

iii.

At the THIRD SHEPHERD's House

FIRST SHEPHERD *and the* THIRD SHEPHERD's WIFE *exit her house.*

WIFE: I still don't believe it. (*Pause*) The sun has gotten to all of you. Even my husband has been acting stranger than usual.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I told you, it was the Merchant—

WIFE: If something has happened, you better tell me now, because this made up story is just cruel. Don't think I don't know how you've treated him.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We're not being cruel.

WIFE: For the love of God then, just tell me what happened.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I told you.

WIFE: No stories, please. If it was an accident tell me now.

Pause

Be decent, just for just a moment.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I can only tell you what I know.

WIFE: I'll remember you treated me this way.

Enter SECOND SHEPHERD, with the body leaning against his shoulder, the THIRD SHEPHERD's belt hangs by its side .

WIFE: This is a horrible joke.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We tried to stop it, tell her.

Pause

Tell her.

FIRST SHEPHERD: But, he put a sleeping spell on us.

SECOND SHEPHERD: And when we awoke...

FIRST SHEPHERD: He had been changed.

WIFE (*Outraged*): A sleeping spell?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Yes.

WIFE: Do you both have brain damage?

SECOND SHEPHERD: We met a Merchant with a wagon, who was selling—

WIFE: You feeble, tedious shepherd. What do you take me for?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Don't raise your voice to me, you—

FIRST SHEPHERD (*Inspired*): We were cold, it was getting late and we hadn't eaten. Nothing's been growing for months, we're all starving. A Merchant, who was passing through, stopped and tried to sell us food. The sight alone of a fresh piece of bread was enough to bring me to tears.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*slightly taken aback*): Yes, um, on the verge of tears—

FIRST SHEPHERD: But, I was so hungry that even the thought of begging hadn't even a chance to cross my mind before I just grabbed the bread from his hand; and before I could eat it the Merchant snapped his fingers and my body became like ice, frozen, and the bread burned my fingers. It fell to the ground, and your husband snatched it up and ate it. The Merchant snapped his fingers one more time and I felt a heaviness weighing down on my shoulders, my limbs slowly being pulled downward. until I was asleep.

WIFE: Who is this Merchant?

SECOND SHEPHERD: He's...a...man from—

FIRST SHEPHERD: And when we awoke, this (*pointing to the body*) was laying next to us, the bread still in his hand.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He was still in his clothes.

WIFE: These clothes?

FIRST SHEPHERD: His belt.

WIFE: Falling off...

SECOND SHEPHERD: Touch him.

Wife rushes stage right to the body. Looks at it silently.

The Shepherds move out of earshot.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Where did that story come from?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Wasn't it what we agreed?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I couldn't have thought of that. What does she want to do about the Merchant?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I don't know if she believes us.

WIFE: He's cold...

SECOND SHEPHERD: You've got to force the Merchant to change him back.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Or else.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Or else he'll remain this way.

WIFE: And if he doesn't?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Then compared to what he'll get, the rack will be...the image of kindness.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Keep him with you, we have to go find a guard.

SECOND and FIRST SHEPHERD walk left. WIFE goes to body, looks at it with puzzlement, and takes it inside. Through the window she can be seen sitting and holding the Body's hand.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Have we ever been cruel to him?

SECOND SHEPHERD: What are you talking about?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Did we ever lie to him?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Of course we lied to him, but he forced us to. Always, with his, "why this way? I've lost count let me start again." He gave us no choice.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What if he comes back?

SECOND SHEPHERD: He'll come to us first, and we'll tell him to wait until the Merchant is taken care of and then we send him home.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why do we have to involve her?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Don't tell me you're having doubts.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What if no one believes us?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Now you sound like our friend.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Does that mean you can lie to me?

SECOND SHEPHERD: This was your idea. I shouldn't have to keep reminding you.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Not all of it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: If she believes us, it will be because of your performance. Where did it come from?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Leave it alone.

SECOND SHEPHERD: You better be able to repeat that story, exactly as you told it, or we're both finished.

They exit. After a pause the THIRD SHEPHERD comes out on stage dirty and disoriented with a cut on his forehead. His eyes are closed. He walks to center and looks into the audience, then opens his eyes. He looks around.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I didn't think I'd make it. The swamp was murder. I think it was a swamp. I kept my eyes closed...mostly, except when I hit a—

He puts a hand to his head. Sees blood on his hand.

Must have been a tree.

Slight pause

But I'm here.

Sees the house.

My house.

He walks slowly to it.

It is.

Looks inside, sees the Body with his wife. Desperately:

He's in there...I'm in there. If I'm in there, then who sees me in there?

Approaches window. Wife sees him, but doesn't recognize him and mouths "Leave me alone" and shuts the blind.

He's in there with her. She doesn't know the one who is looking. Then it's true. I'm in there. I'm not...

Closes his eyes.

ACT IV

i.

Merchant's Factory

The MERCHANT center, in his factory. Many of the machines have been turned off. He stands in front of one of the bodies, putting final touches on its face, which looks like the ASSISTANT.

MERCHANT: This one won't be for sale. It looks more like him, then he does.

Throughout the scene, behind him on the screen, the PLAYERS led by the shepherds and the WIFE gather outside. A loud knock is heard.

Stayed away just long enough to make me miss him, and then the dramatic entrance.

He covers the effigy's face.

I'm not going to give him the satisfaction. And he won't be building anything.

He goes to open the door.

At least he's not sneaking up on me this time.

The door bursts open.

Enter the SHEPHERDS, WIFE, followed by the PLAYERS.

SECOND SHEPHERD: This is him.

MERCHANT: Who are all these people? Where's my Assistant?

WIFE: This is the Merchant?

SECOND SHEPHERD: This is the fiend.

MERCHANT: You said you'd have found him by now.

WIFE: Who are all these people? *(In reference to the bodies)*

MERCHANT: People?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Try putting us to sleep this time.

MERCHANT: You're the ones with the sleeping condition. I didn't do anything, and suddenly you're all lying on the floor.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We want our money back.

MERCHANT: You owe *me* money.

WIFE: What money? Make him change it back. (*In reference to the Shepherd-body, propped up by two guards.*)

SECOND SHEPHERD: Of course. You tell him.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*reluctantly*): Change this body back into her husband.

MERCHANT: Who's her husband? And where's your sleepy friend?

SECOND SHEPHERD: He admits it.

MERCHANT: Admits what?

BOUND: Enough chatter.

MERCHANT: Someone tell me what's going on.

BOUND: You've been charged.

MERCHANT: With what? Who are these cretins?

BOUND: Bring out the body, cretins.

FLOP and REEM come forward holding the body.

MERCHANT: We agreed it was supposed to find my assistant.

WIFE: What assistant?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I said he'd try to lie his way out of this.

MERCHANT: You're the one who's lying. You (*to FIRST SHEPHERD*) sleepy-head number two, set this straight before it goes too far.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's...

MERCHANT: Tell them, or I'll set the guards on *you*.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Tell them.

WIFE: Make him change him back.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Tell them.

MERCHANT (*to* SECOND SHEPHERD): I suggest you stop all this nonsense.

FIRST SHEPHERD *to* MERCHANT: He's the one who changed your husband into this.

SECOND SHEPHERD: See.

FIRST SHEPHERD: And, unless you can change him back, the whole factory is to be burned.

WIFE: What did he ever do to you?

MERCHANT: Could someone set this woman straight.

WIFE: He's still in his clothes.

MERCHANT: You dressed up one of my...

FIRST SHEPHERD: Change it back.

BOUND: Hurry up, then, I want to see.

MERCHANT (*moves to the body*): Put him down.

FLOP and REEM drop it.

MERCHANT: Stand up.

The body groggily stands.

WIFE: He's moving...

MERCHANT: Give me some room.

SECOND SHEPHERD: If you can't do it, you know what'll happen to you.

MERCHANT: Don't worry about that.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*Aside to* SECOND SHEPHERD): What if he can do it?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Be quiet and watch. (*To MERCHANT*) Are you going to wave your hand and chant?

MERCHANT: I need quiet.

CLAP accidentally knocks over another body, and a bunch of them fall and begin moving.

BOUND: What is this—he's mobilizing them.

FLOP: Stop him.

MERCHANT: I can't work like this.

He goes to quiet the bodies.

You'll all have to leave.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Why? It only took you seconds to change him, why can't you just change him right back.

MERCHANT: Change him back, I thought you were asleep.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We were, but not for that long.

MERCHANT: How do you know? Besides, the reverse operation takes much more time and concentration, and since you caught me, found me, and cleverly cornered me, I'm going to need more time and privacy to finish the transformation.

WIFE: Give him whatever it takes.

CLAP: She does make a good point.

REEM: We could use the rehearsal time.

SECOND SHEPHERD: If he can't do it now then we'll have to take appropriate measures.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Just give him some time. How much do you need?

SECOND SHEPHERD (*taking FIRST SHEPHERD aside*): Don't be stupid; it's another trick.

FIRST SHEPHERD: There's nothing he can do. We'll have them guard outside.

SECOND SHEPHERD: You better not be having second thoughts.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We have to be tactical.

SECOND SHEPHERD *to* MERCHANT: How much time do you need?

MERCHANT: Tonight.

BOUND: One night. We'll resume in the morning.

SECOND SHEPHERD: But, we want guards.

BOUND: One night, and tonight your factory will be guarded.

They all begin to file out. WIFE lingers behind. She approaches the body, moves to touch it. Stops. Looks at it.

WIFE: You better give him back to me.

She exits.

MERCHANT *Goes to look out the door. Offstage the two guards are playing with one of the bodies.*

MERCHANT: What are you doing?

Exits.

(Off) Give it to me.

Enters with a body.

Brutish clowns.

He puts the body with the others.

Devine Afflatus?!

They didn't find my assistant; made up a story, that way they won't have to pay me, and then they can kill me. There must be some answer. If my assistant were here, I could disguise him, pass him off as a shepherd—that's what he wanted—then I could escape.

Maybe it's true; maybe I'm not building them properly.

As he tells his story, the bodies act out sections.

I remember once when I sold one to a group of farmers. One day one of them accidentally left one in a doctor's waiting room—must have been the week of that cold. The doctor assumed it had fainted while waiting. No pulse, no heartbeat. He felt so guilty that he brought the thing to a church to ask the advice of the priest. But, he became so frightened he left the body in the church, ran home and hid under his bed.

Somehow, the body ended up in the confessional. Unfortunately, the priest wasn't in the booth. He was taking a break and had left another of my effigy's to take his place. When he returned and opened the door to the booth the first body came tumbling out. He rushed out into the market with the body. There he dressed the supposed corpse as a beggar and left it by one of the stands. Then he ran back to the church and hid under a pew.

At the market, a thief had run off with a handful of stolen bananas. The storeowner pursued the thief. After a few minutes he gave up and puffed his way back to his stand. He saw the effigy sitting in the shadows. The storeowner kicked it as hard as he could. The body fell flat on the ground. The store owner berated it for stealing from him day in and out, pausing to kick him a few more times for good measure. Then he realized that it wasn't moving or breathing. Shocked that he had killed it with only a few blows, he lay down with it and wept. He took the body over his shoulder and told a nearby watchman that he was guilty of murder.

The store owner was brought to the gallows where he gazed out at a crowd eagerly awaiting a hanging. But the moment that his crime was announced, there was a stirring in the audience. The priest ran up to the platform and proclaimed that it was, in fact, through his own negligence that the man died. Upon hearing this, there was another murmuring in the crowd as the doctor got up and said that, in fact, it was through his laziness that the poor creature died in his waiting room. Just as they were about to be hanged, the body stood up, took a few wobbly steps and fell apart. Thus they were forgiven for a crime they didn't commit.

A big sigh

Maybe I have become lazy. But, what's in a body? Joints, bones, what does it matter if it's just a little out of proportion. An extra limb. Better than missing one; you never understood. These mute effigies don't breathe. These old machines, these somnolent engines—who am I wasting my breath on? (*Pointing to the bodies*) Look at my audience.

ii.

In a clearing in the woods. The THIRD SHEPHERD thinking he is the body stands performing one of the movements from act I. ASSISTANT enters. She doesn't see him.

ASSISTANT (*sing-song*):

Let us go where roses grow
And fields are in flower

In the way that is ours alone,
Below the winds and shower.

Why didn't he come? If I can get back he'll let me build my own. So he said.

She sees the THIRD SHEPHERD. She puts on her hat, then ducks and hides. She approaches slowly. He stops moving.

ASSISTANT: Hello? Do you need some help?

Pause

Deaf?

She moves closer.

Maybe he reads lips.

Faces him. Mouths:

Hello?

Slight pause

Maybe he can't see me.

She opens both of his eyes. Mouths:

Hello?

She touches him.

Cold.

She pushes him.

Can you feel that?

He falls onto his side.

Wait, what's it doing here? They must've left you.

She flips him over.

He gave it a face. He must have come and fixed you, and given you...an unfortunately ugly face. But, a face nonetheless.

Walk.

It doesn't move.

He didn't do a very good job. I'll have to take you back. But, why should I? He probably won't even lift his head when I walk through the door.

I would've given you a much nicer face, you know.

She pulls at him. He doesn't move.

But where else can I go? Fine, but he won't know who brought you.

iii.

Outside the factory, Flop, Clap, Wife.

FLOP: Are you going to wait here all night, you?

Wife doesn't respond.

CLAP: Maybe she didn't hear you.

Flop (*as if she were deaf*): I asked if you were going to wait all night.

WIFE: I'm not leaving without him.

FLOP: I just want to know if you're going to wait *here*.

CLAP: He doesn't care about where you're going, he asked if—

WIFE: Yes, I'm going to sit here all night.

FLOP: That's *our* job.

CLAP: We're also theatre professionals.

FLOP: Do you want to see our play?

Wife (*aside*): I knew this would be a long night.

FLOP: We're missing most of the cast as you can see, but we can double up on some of the parts.

WIFE: Who'll do the guarding while you're performing?

FLOP: We can do both jobs at once.

WIFE: I won't be a good audience.

CLAP: Just sit with your back to the door, and we'll face the door; that way we can see and you won't be distracted.

At far left, First and SECOND SHEPHERD mill about.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Maybe we should just give him the rack instead of this new device, it's probably not as bad as he described it. "anthromorphic [sic] fingers."

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's not up to us what he gets.

SECOND SHEPHERD: How would you do it, if you had the choice?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I'd rather not think about it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I've always seen bodies as a very dignified things. Have you ever seen it before? I got to see one once. But, you have more important tactics on your mind, don't you? What are you planning?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Nothing. I was just wondering where he could be.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Dead. Who cares?

FIRST SHEPHERD: What if he finds the assistant and leads him back to the Merchant, and when we arrive tomorrow he tells everyone what really happened?

Pause

SECOND SHEPHERD (*suddenly worried.*): He'll tell everything. Why didn't you think of that before? We'll be the ones to get the rack.

FIRST SHEPHERD: It'll settle your curiosity, at least.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Why didn't you tell me this when we were making the plan?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It didn't occur to me, and you said he would just come back to us before anything else happened.

SECOND SHEPHERD: I can't wait here.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Do what you want. I'm staying here.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Here isn't safe. Come, we'll guard him ourselves.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Us?

SECOND SHEPHERD: If we're there, we can intercept them when they come back.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Go yourself, I'm staying here; I'm finally going to get some sleep.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*grabs his throat.*): You're not sleeping tonight. I'll murder you, then you'll sleep.

FIRST SHEPHERD: After tonight take the flock and field.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He made us believe we didn't have to work anymore. We were relieved, we'd never considered the possibility. Now we'll have to do double the work, and I don't want to do it anymore.

Removes his hands from his neck.

I need you to come and convince the guards to let us stay there alone.

Center. CLAP and FLOP perform for WIFE, who is indifferent.

FLOP: For your pleasure tonight, lady and...you'll be bearing witness to why we love "the spectacle".

WIFE: You've been introducing it for an hour.

FLOP: Excitement, love, slaughter, and barbarism.

Enter the Shepherds.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What's going on here?

FIRST SHEPHERD: Doesn't look like they're guarding much.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Are they also actors?

FLOP: We present: The Slaughter of the Innocents.

CLAP: You start.

FLOP: Me?

CLAP: You're Herod.

FLOP: No, I'm the messenger.

CLAP: I thought I was the messenger.

WIFE *begins to look very sad.*

FLOP: Look what you've done.

CLAP: Me? I'm just the messenger.

FLOP: Say your line, then.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Excuse me, sorry to interrupt, but—

FLOP: Are you part of this play?

SECOND SHEPHERD: No, but—

CLAP: Then go away.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's a carefree night tonight, isn't it?

WIFE: What do you want?

SECOND SHEPHERD: We—

FIRST SHEPHERD: We were sent to help you rehearse for a bit and then to relieve you.
You're supposed to come back tomorrow.

CLAP: They could play the other characters.

SECOND SHEPHERD: That's what I was trying to say. What play is this?

Enter the ASSISTANT with the THIRD SHEPHERD from back, they are not seen.

FLOP: The Slaughter of the Innocents.

ASSISTANT: What are they doing here?

CLAP: Let's re-cast, then.

FLOP: I'll be Herod.

CLAP: I'll be the knights.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Who are we supposed to be?

FLOP: You're both the innocents.

FIRST SHEPHERD: What do we have to do?

ASSISTANT: You'll love this role; you don't have to memorize anything.

WIFE: What about the mothers?

CLAP: The who?

WIFE: The mothers who try to fight off the knights when they slay the children. They pull their hair, argue, then hit them with pots and pans.

FLOP: I don't remember that part.

WIFE: Where's the script?

CLAP: We don't have one.

WIFE: How do you remember your lines?

FLOP: One of us tries to remember the story, then we choose parts.

CLAP: We can remember the important parts.

WIFE: So your acting's as good as your guarding.

FLOP: You play the part of the mothers. then.

SECOND SHEPHERD: It might get it over with faster.

WIFE: I don't know the lines.

CLAP: Make them up.

WIFE: I just want my husband. I'm waiting here because I can't go home.

Pause

FLOP: Is that what the mothers say? Did I miss a line?

CLAP: The play begins with Herod, played by me. (*To Wife*) You'll have to wait for your cue.

ASSISTANT: Change her husband? (THIRD SHEPHERD *closes his eyes, his head sinks as if he's looking at the ground.*) Who are you? We can't just barge in on them. Those actors have swords.

She takes him by the hand.

We'll think of another way.

They exit.

ACT V

i.

MERCHANT's Factory. *It's the next morning. The MERCHANT is asleep on his work table. Next to him is a body under a sheet.*

On screen: the FIRST and SECOND SHEPHERD.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Wake up.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What time is it?

FIRST SHEPHERD: It's light out.

SECOND SHEPHERD: My back hurts, what kind of play was that supposed to be, beating us like that.

FIRST SHEPHERD: They beat me twice as hard as they beat you.

The MERCHANT awakes with a start. He frantically sweeps away some wood shavings around the work table.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Where'd his wife go?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I think she went to wash her face. You have a black eye.

SECOND SHEPHERD: *She* gave it to me.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I don't remember any mothers ever being in the play.

BOUND: Where are the rest of you?

REEM: I told you shouldn't have left them to guard.

BOUND: Are you starting?

REEM: No, no, no.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We took over for them, they needed to go and rehearse.

BOUND: They didn't tell us about it.

SECOND SHEPHERD: There they are.

BOUND: Then no more milling about.

The doors slam open. Enter FLOP, CLAP, the SHEPHERDS, the WIFE, BOUND, and REEM. CLAP and FLOP push a giant box.

MERCHANT (*staring fixedly at the giant box.*): It's in my factory.

SECOND SHEPHERD: That's it?

FIRST SHEPHERD: I don't see any fingers.

MERCHANT: They're inside.

WIFE: Where's my husband?

MERCHANT: I don't smell anything.

BOUND: You will when we turn it on. Masks.

FLOP and REEM put on masks.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Turn it on.

MERCHANT: Wait.

BOUND: I'll say when to turn it on.

FIRST SHEPHERD: I'm leaving.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Don't you go now, or I'll put you in the box.

WIFE: Where's my husband?

BOUND: Yes, where is he?

MERCHANT: The change was a success, however, he's sleeping and waking him up now will erase his memory.

SECOND SHEPHERD: He's lying What does that mean "erase his memory"?

MERCHANT: With these procedures the brain becomes very susceptible to the slightest change.

WIFE: Where is he? Show him to me.

BOUND: Yes, show him to us.

MERCHANT: You can't touch him, remember.

He un-veils the replica of the THIRD SHEPHERD. It looks identical to the THIRD SHEPHERD in a sleeping position.

FIRST SHEPHERD (*whispering*): He did it.

Wife (*approaches it*): Is he alive?

MERCHANT: Quite alive, but asleep. So don't disturb him.

FLOP: It looks dead.

CLAP: It does look dead.

The SECOND SHEPHERD puts a knife up against the FIRST SHEPHERD's back.

SECOND SHEPHERD (*whispering*): Say something, or I'll stab you right now.

Enter the ASSISTANT with THIRD SHEPHERD, unnoticed. The ASSISTANT's hat is on the THIRD SHEPHERD and she has rearranged her clothing into a slight disguise.

FIRST SHEPHERD: The agreement was that he bring him back—this isn't what he promised.

MERCHANT: You're the ones with the sleeping condition; therefore, it makes sense that he is asleep. I did what I was told.

FIRST SHEPHERD: How do we know he's not dead?

MERCHANT: Look closely and you'll see by his position. Dead people don't sleep curled up—they're stiff. Clearly he's not stiff.

FIRST SHEPHERD: We agreed he be changed by morning. It's morning and the change isn't complete.

BOUND: Was this the agreement?

MERCHANT: No, we—

BOUND: I didn't ask you.

WIFE: That was definitely the agreement. This is nonsense.

BOUND: Bring him here.

FLOP and REEM *grab the MERCHANT and bring him to BOUND.*

ASSISTANT (*Aside*): He's really out done himself, this time.

BOUND: According to the laws that we uphold, pass judgment upon his body.

MERCHANT: Take any of them, whatever you want.

SECOND SHEPHERD: A little late for that.

MERCHANT (*Desperately*): Anything!

They start the machine. It whirs, the characters nearest grab their noses.

ASSISTANT: Wait.

The apparatus makes a screeching sound.

BOUND: Who are you?

ASSISTANT: I'm the scavenger's daughter.

BOUND: Who's the scavenger?

ASSISTANT: He lives on the edge of the forest and takes things that other people leave behind. He found this person and told me to bring him here. I assume he's the one you're looking for.

SECOND SHEPHERD: That's impossible. Why are we stopping?

BOUND: Let her speak.

ASSISTANT: He was lying in a field, asleep.

SECOND SHEPHERD *lunges at her.* The FIRST SHEPHERD *restrains him.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: Get her out.

WIFE: Who are you?

SECOND SHEPHERD: How do we know it's her husband? Her husband is lying over there.

CLAP: He raises a good point. Now we have two husbands.

ASSISTANT: Tell them.

The THIRD SHEPHERD is silent.

SECOND SHEPHERD: See, it can't speak.

MERCHANT (*weakly to wife.*): Which one do you think he is?

BOUND: Place them side by side.

FLOP and REEM place them side by side center stage. WIFE approaches and looks closely.

WIFE: They both seem...unfamiliar. I can't tell.

BOUND: Make up your mind.

FLOP: You must make a decision.

SECOND SHEPHERD: We'll decide for her—she's obviously unfit.

She points to the mannequin.

WIFE: He's my husband. I don't know the other.

ASSISTANT (*aside*): Now he chooses to build them properly.

BOUND: Put him in the box.

MERCHANT: But, I gave you what you asked for. This doesn't make any sense. Just give me more time.

BOUND: You've already had your time.

MERCHANT: She said it's her husband.

SECOND SHEPHERD: That's not the point.

BOUND: Be quiet. No one's talking to you.

ASSISTANT *To the* THIRD SHEPHERD: Speak, or they'll kill him.

The THIRD SHEPHERD remains mute, eyes closed.

ASSISTANT goes to the mannequin. Without touching it she makes it rise. Two other bodies rise up from behind her with instruments. They begin to play a song.

CLAP: It's moving.

MERCHANT: How do you know how to make them move?

The mannequin takes the WIFE. They dance. The dance ends. The WIFE steps back.

WIFE: It's not him.

FLOP: Then which is he?

She looks at THIRD SHEPHERD.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Enough of this. Put him in. I want to see what it does.

BOUND: Are you starting?

SECOND SHEPHERD: What?

FIRST SHEPHERD breaks away from the SECOND SHEPHERD. He rushes to the THIRD SHEPHERD.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Why don't you speak? You know me.

No response.

We said you didn't have eyes.

It stirs.

But, you do have eyes, we only said you didn't.

It open its eyes.

You can see.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Stop this.

He tries to advance on him, but is restrained, by FLOP and REEM.

FIRST SHEPHERD: You have ears, you can hear me. And you have a mouth, so you can speak.

The THIRD SHEPHERD moves his mouth. Opens it, closes it.

Tell us what happened.

THIRD SHEPHERD *makes sounds with his mouth.*

SECOND SHEPHERD: It's unintelligible.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Wait. Count the sheep.

THIRD SHEPHERD: One...two...three...

SECOND SHEPHERD: This is just foolishness.

THIRD SHEPHERD: You...pinched...me.

WIFE: He's speaking.

THIRD SHEPHERD: I...didn't have a mouth, or eyes, or ears. I felt my way around. I was a shadow. My wife was with me in my house, that meant that I wasn't myself anymore.

WIFE: Why didn't I recognize you?

SECOND SHEPHERD: Only her husband could make so little sense.

BOUND: Then the other's a fake.

WIFE *to* FIRST SHEPHERD: You changed him back.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Yes, and we agreed that if the MERCHANT couldn't then we'd burn the factory, with him in the box.

FIRST SHEPHERD: But—

SECOND SHEPHERD (*put the knife up to his back.*): We've heard enough out of you.

THIRD SHEPHERD: They sent me into the woods to find someone. But, I didn't find him.

ASSISTANT *to the* FIRST SHEPHERD: If he changed him back, it means that he changed him in the first place.

WIFE: Then they should be put in the box.

SECOND SHEPHERD: They're all lying.

BOUND: Put them both in the box.

WIFE: And close the door.

SECOND SHEPHERD *tries to escape, but is restrained by REEM and CLAP.*
FLOP *takes the FIRST SHEPHERD who goes willingly.*

BOUND: Turn it on.

The machine whirs, everyone holds their nose. It suddenly screeches, and stops.

BOUND: It's broken (*to REEM*). He was supposed to clean it.

REEM: Flop said he'd clean it.

FLOP: No!

A book falls out of the device. CLAP rushes over to it, and scoops it off the floor.

CLAP: The script.

REEM: *That's where I...*

BOUND: Now someone can tell us the ending.

WIFE: Let me see it.

CLAP *gives it to her. She flips through the pages.*

I knew there were mothers in it.

REEM: Well, we never really got that far in it.

REEM (*approaching the replica.*): What should we do with this?

MERCHANT: Don't touch it.

REEM: Why not? Will we erase it's memory?

MERCHANT *slumps down silent.*

FLOP: Test it in the device.

REEM *lifts it up.*

ASSISTANT: Leave it alone.

BOUND: Put it in.

ASSISTANT: Put it down.

FLOP: Go home imp.

REEM puts the body into the box and turns it on. A loud noise is heard.

SECOND SHEPHERD *to* FIRST SHEPHERD: Come on, let's go.

SECOND SHEPHERD attempts to run, but is restrained by FLOP.

FLOP: What should we do with them?

BOUND: Take them with us.

CLAP: We could use more actors now that we lost one.

BOUND: Both of you come with us. We have a lot of work to do.

REEM gags the SECOND SHEPHERD and they exit.

WIFE: How do feel?

THIRD SHEPHERD: I'm hungry.

WIFE: We still have some potatoes at home.

They exit

MERCHANT: Enjoy your potatoes! They almost turn me into pulp, then they go to eat potatoes.

ASSISTANT: They're just shepherds.

MERCHANT: At least they believed your costume.

ASSISTANT: Because it's not a costume.

MERCHANT: It's not a costume.

ASSISTANT: When my father sent me here, he dressed me up and said if I told you, you'd send me away.

He goes to her. Looks her up and down.

MERCHANT: I could have used you to make sales.

Pause

ASSISTANT: What's stopping you now?

MERCHANT: This isn't a good place for a girl.

ASSISTANT: I'm still the same person.

MERCHANT: You'll want to get married.

ASSISTANT: Not to anyone around here.

MERCHANT: You *want* to stay?

ASSISTANT: Yes.

MERCHANT: You can build one if you want.

ASSISTANT: With a face?

MERCHANT: As long as it's not mine.

ASSISTANT: Should we clean up?

MERCHANT: When you were gone...

Back a curtain sputters open. Light. Dust. They both turn and look.

I almost forgot it's morning.

ASSISTANT (*Nearing the wagon*): Do you want me to start here?

MERCHANT: No, let's get rid of this first.

MERCHANT *pushes the box*. ASSISTANT *takes one end*. They *role it offstage*.